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THE CALL *of* THE CROSS

THE
SPIRITUAL MESSAGE
OF THE METHODIST
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN
IN CONNECTION WITH THE
INTER-CHURCH FORWARD
MOVEMENT



ISSUED BY
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299 QUEEN STREET WEST, TORONTO

COPIES AVAILABLE ON APPLICATION

The Call of the Cross

THE members of the Spiritual Aims Committee of our Church, appointed in connection with the United National Campaign of the Interchurch Forward Movement in Canada, after meeting to take account of the general situation desire to express some of the thoughts and purposes which have been most deeply impressed upon their minds. Suggestions concerning the organization of the campaign will be sent forth, from time to time, but there are some thoughts which cannot be expressed in a programme, and these have been uppermost in our deliberations.

THE Inter-Church Movement had its birth in a deep sense of need. The churches have been made aware of enormous tasks, and compelled to take account of their resources. We write with a deep sense of responsibility when we state that, in our judgment, never has the challenge to the Church been more imperative, never has the opportunity been greater than to-day. Are our resources adequate? Can we confront the world-situation eagerly and confidently with an assured and joyful faith that we have in Christ the answer to its problems, the sure remedy for its woes?

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SOME features in the challenge should be noted in order that the situation be faced with serious determination.

THE Social Problem is at our doors. The attempt to base human society upon a doctrine of enlightened selfishness has broken down—and this time on a world scale. Men are groping in the twilight to find security, and many who had not thought along these lines before are coming to see that the Christian basis of social life is the only possible one. A more direct appeal to the Church than that which is presented by the disintegration of ancient systems, held together by force, could hardly be conceived.

THE challenge from the Mission Field is not one whit less penetrating. The Orient is awake, and nations destined to be potent for good or evil are plastic. Now is the moment for an impression to be made. The chemist in his experiment avails himself of the moment when all things are favorable to produce his desired result. It is difficult for us to conceive an hour fraught with greater issues for India, China and Japan than the present.

THERE is, further, a widespread demand for an increased emphasis on certain aspects of Christian discipleship. Without attempting to apportion blame, we have come to see, with painful and perplexing clearness, that some essential features of the Christian programme of life have not, in many cases, been associated with the Faith. The testimony of Army chaplains is emphatic on this point, and it is important that we should face it without evasion.

THESE are some of the challenging voices which reach us—some mockingly, some wistfully, some hopefully—but all to be taken into consideration by those who would rally the Christian forces of our land to the making of a new world. The answer of the Church must be equal to the call. The stupendous task that is before us must be faced in a magnificent way, magnificent

in courage, endurance and confidence. We have been too timid in our claim, too hesitant in our impact upon the world, too cautious in our spiritual loyalties.

CHRISTIANITY also has its challenge, and it is one that goes down to the bed-rock of civilization. It has been vindicated, by the events of the last few years, to an extent which almost constitutes a new revelation. It has need of no apologist. A materialistic philosophy has led the world to the verge of chaos; selfishness is sweeping the lands like a pestilence.

WE are called, in this critical hour, to a new commitment to the cause of Christ; to confront, in His Name, non-Christian assumptions and principles with a calm but determined assertion of His supremacy; to awaken a new and passionate loyalty in the hearts of our young people to their Lord, so that His standard may be carried by their strong hands into every department of life—political, social, commercial, domestic. The Church should begin this Forward Movement by burning the bridges behind, and should look back gladly upon the towering pillars of smoke. We want a faith reckless in its daring, full of venture and enterprise in the cause of the Kingdom. Our rallying-cry should be that of the warrior-monks of old, "Christus Imperator."

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WHAT is the condition of the Church? We gratefully remember the noble body of men and women who find their supreme interest in the cause of Christ, and who stand fast, amid many alluring calls, delighting to serve their Lord. We cannot believe, however, that the Church as a whole is making an adequate response to that tremendous call of God which comes to us through the need of the hour. There are some things which, it has seemed to us, we specially need to cultivate.

FIRST, a more vivid sense of the presence of God.

Back of all other weaknesses we believe there lies this enfeebled consciousness of God. Apathy in public worship, a lack of interest in Bible Study, intermittence in prayer, all these would vanish if only God were real enough and present enough to make them seem essential to our life. A famous novelist has written nothing for the last four years but an account of how God came to him and how his life has been transformed by the great discovery. He declares that this experience has been given to hundreds of thousands besides himself. It is likely to be true. God has usually been discovered in great human experiences. He comes through these happenings because He is always *in* them.

WE have lost trace of God in the multitude of His activities. When we talk of the presence of God, we usually refer to some religious meeting in which He came to us and made Himself known. But the doctrine of the Incarnation implies fellowship with God in every human interest and relationship. Each redemptive energy and business of the world is a call to communion. Nothing is held securely until it is held in Him. Christianity is not the substitution of religion for other interests; it is the permeation of everything by the supreme spiritual interest. Life is communion with God, and the world a summons to partnership with Him. We need to live in the material world on a spiritual plane, having our minds illumined, our wills strengthened, our whole being elevated, by this sublime companionship. Faber points out the only sure antidote to pessimism in his lines:

“Workman of God, O lose not heart,
But learn what God is like.”

SECOND, the New Testament Ideal of the Church.

We should aim at a recovery of this ideal. No “higher” doctrine of the Church has ever been pronounced than may be found in such phrases as . . . “the Body of Christ,”

"the Bride of Christ," "the family of the firstborn of the dead." The Church is not an accidental addendum to the Kingdom, to be accepted or rejected according to the mood of the day. It is a Divine creation. It has exercised, with all its limitations and imperfections, a regenerating influence in human history through its Divine Creator. If, as Lord Morley declared, "the spiritual life of Europe for nineteen centuries has been kindled at the torch of the sublime mystic of the Galilean hills," it must not be forgotten that the flame has been centred in the Church.

THE dismemberment or the decline of the Church means the impoverishment of the world. Who would live in a land without reverence? The Greek moralists warned their fellow countrymen against the "sin of insolence," by which they meant the spirit of irreverence. That warning unheeded, the nation passed to its doom. And who would knowingly dispense with the corporate witness of the Church to the principles of its Lord? The day may come when some sweeping passion shall lead a headstrong people to impeach those moral laws which hold us to reality. Then the Church must stand alone as the bulwark against license and anarchy. Who again, in this age of deepening social consciousness, does not see the immense possibility of the fellowship of the Church, a fellowship arising out of spiritual affinity, and the sense of a common loyalty and a common task?

THIRD, the heroic note in the Christian Ethic needs to be sounded afresh. No more direct appeal for the forceful soul, the decisive will, was ever made than that of our Lord. He warned men continually against the ungirt loin, the unlit lamp, the listless hand. And yet the Christian spirit has been interpreted as a system of negations; a withholding from certain notorious

evils. The Ethic of Jesus calls men to the life of business and society as clearly as it calls to the mission field or the pulpit. It is the supreme summons to the hero in the soul. Its task is immense and comprehensive. Upon its victory all progress depends. There will be need of all the courage and patience, the chivalry and unselfishness of our hearts, if we would fulfil our part in this divine crusade.

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THE first condition of these great acceptances is a re-discovery of the meaning and power of prayer. Someone has said that the world "is trembling on the verge of an apocalypse." A sense of something vast and solemn about to happen has fallen upon the most careless. We know that when the consenting will of man is brought into contact with the will of God something good will happen. The invasion of the single and collective soul by the redeeming energy of God radiated through prayer is the primary condition of effectual living on that scale which the situation requires. This quickening of the soul by the prayer-habit will enable us to see God in His redeeming activities in the world and make us one with Him there; it will restore in its fulness the idea of the Church to the love and reverence of the new generation; and it will awaken the hero in the soul and teach us to dare all for His sake.

WE profoundly believe that there are a number of men and women waiting for the summons to enlist in a new order of life and who look for the joy and strength of conscious fellowship in order to do far more for Christ and His Kingdom than they have ever done. They may, at first, constitute "tiny beginnings," but they will prove themselves to be beginnings charged with great promise.

We need to think out the practical interpretations of the Christian ideal of life and discipleship in a fellowship of prayer; we need to forge the bands of Christian fellowship in this fire of the heart; we need to find the leadership of the future in the fusion and union of thought and action in the atmosphere of intercessory fellowship.

THE Call of the Cross. The call which we have striven to interpret is urgent indeed, and it asks of us that we accept the Cross in all its issues, and embrace with eagerness and exhilaration, the simplicities, the rigours and the sacrifices of the Kingdom of God. Christianity has never failed where it has been tried. It will certainly succeed to-day if we are faithful. In a memorable sentence Mommsen summed up the condition of the Greco-Roman world: "The world was growing old, and not even Cæsar could make it young again." But we know that where governments failed, Christ succeeded; He renewed its youth. A new life throbbed through the world, lifting sad and weary hearts to joy, expelling the evil germs that poisoned life.

TO us who are the children of the Methodist Revival hope may come from the remembrance of our own origin. All the features we have named in the statement of the challenge were present when new life came to the Wesleys and their fellows. The industrial revolution drives its roots back to those days; they had to face the Social Problem, and how successfully they did so the history of the nineteenth century shows. The world was opening out in America, Australia, South Africa, as our world is opening in the Orient: and because they heard the call from across the waters, Methodism burst its local bands and became a world-Church. The re-statement of faith in Wesley's day was such as to evoke a storm of criticism and protest; but our fathers held fast the truths they had re-discovered in Christ, until those

truths became the treasured possession of all the Churches.

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THE thing which hath been is the thing that shall be.
“The one false word in life is Ichabod.” The glory is not departed. Christ is calling us to a new order of life; if we are faithful to Him we shall help to save the world from a social order that breeds despair, and to make the Church more central in the new era than senate, market-place or school.

